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ABSTRACT

A measure of student alienation was developed from the University Student Census (USC), an activities and attitude inventory that was administered to undergraduates carrying nine or more hours at the University of Maryland. Responses available from 13,700 sophomores, juniors, and seniors were used in factor analysis of the attitude items. A random sample of 540 subjects were administered a Likert Scale to evaluate 17 statements on the USC, and these 17 items were factor analyzed. Results indicate a rather consistent behaviorial validation for the alienation scale. The more alienated students knew fewer faculty, felt more need for counseling, and fewer of their fathers attended the University of Maryland. Another finding was that students who dated more felt more alienated. It could be that the more active students on campus (including socially active) tend to be more critical of the university and therefore more alienated. The scale focuses on alienation from the university, and this alienation could be seen as independent of alienation from peers. It is further possible that students alienated from the school seek involvement elsewhere. Results also indicate that new students (freshmen or transfer) anticipated less alienation than other students felt. (Author/SW)

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Office of Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs

UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND

College Park, Maryland

Variables Related to University Student Alienation

Du Mont K. Schmidt and William E. Sedlacek

Research Report # 13-70

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Summary

A measure of student alienation from the University was developed from the University Student Census (USC). Alienation was operationally defined as feeling that most instructors, advisors and administrators do not care about students, that channels for expressing student complaints are unavailable, and that coursework is not stimulating.

The results indicated a rather consistent behavioral validation for the alienation scale. For instance, the more alienated students knew fewer faculty, felt more need for counseling (Table 5), and it was less likely their fathers attended the University of Maryland (Table 6). The latter point could be that sharing attendance with one's father could give a basis for identification with the school. The fact that students dating more felt more alienated (Table 4) appears as an apparent contradiction to the discussion above. Several explanations are possible. It could be that the more active students on campus (including socially active) tend to be more critical of the University and hence more alienated. The scale does focus on alienation from the University and this could be seen as independent of alienation from peers. It is also possible that students alienated from the school seek involvement elsewhere.

Results also indicated that new students (freshmen or transfer) anticipated less alienation than other students felt.

It is hoped that through studies on alienation, schools and indeed, students, will be able to change; the school by providing more meaningful experiences and opportunities for students, and students by better understanding their relationship to the school.

The current trend in research relating to student ecology is to view the college or university setting as an environment in which many sources of influence are brought to bear on the student. The educative influence of the classroom environment is but one aspect of the cultural milieu of the university or college. This viewpoint is apparent in such sources as Sanford (1962), Sutherland, et al. (1962), Newcomb and Wilson (1966), and others. These sources tend to view the process of education in terms of the assimilation and adaptation of a student to the campus culture, and the interaction of an individual with that culture.

There are several reasons why this approach has become especially relevant in recent times. It seems apparent, on the basis of recent events on college and university campuses, that students are becoming more and more expressive of their dissaffection with certain aspects of their educational experience. Student expression of dissent and/or discontent has sometimes been focused on factors directly related to student life on campus, such as administrative policies; sometimes on factors less obviously related, such as national policies or concerns. Dissent may not always be clearly related to a specific source nor is the expression of dissent always necessary for the attainment of goals. Nonetheless, so little is known about student dissatisfaction, alienation or dissaffection with their environment that a systematic study of the phenomenon seems imperative if some way of dealing with it is to be formulated, whether that be from the standpoint of better and more systematic selection of colleges by students, administrative program change, or some other avenue of change or emphasis. Conceptualizing the problem in terms of the interactions between an individual student and his educative environment would seem to be an appropriate way of approaching the issue.

One way of describing a campus culture is to focus on students' perceptions, attitudes, or opinions of that culture. One of the more well-known lines of research which describes student perceptions of their environment is that initiated by Pace and Stern (1958), resulting in the more recent development of the College and University Environment Scales, or CUES (Pace, 1963).

Some studies have found that the better the "fit" between an individual and his college environment, the more satisfied he will be. (Pervin, 1967, Richardson, 1968).

Cram (1968) found that size of class made no difference in student satisfaction with classroom environment. Lewis (1968) found that congruity between ideal and real perceptions of college was positively related to college choice satisfaction.

Rand (1968) provides contradictory evidence regarding the relationship between satisfaction and student-environment congruency. He included measures of scholastic potential, personality, interests, and subcultural orientation on freshmen at 28 colleges. The results of this study cast serious doubt on any simplistic notions of "goodness of fit" as related to satisfaction. The notion that students most similar or dissimilar to students at their chosen school are more satisfied or dissatisfied was not supported. He concludes that the relationship between satisfaction and matching is at best minimal and quite complex.

Diedrich and Jackson (1969) investigated the relationship between satisfaction and a number of variables, and found that dissatisfied students, as seen by their teachers, tended to violate common expectations in the classroom; a kind of unpredictableness. Interestingly, satisfaction was unrelated

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to achievement or ability measures.

Waterman and Waterman (1969) and Grieneeks (1969) investigated ego identity status in relation to satisfaction, and found that high ego identity is related to some forms of satisfaction, but not to others. Feldman and Newcomb (1969) summarize a number of studies which provide tentative support for the common notion of "sophomore slump" (i.e., a low point of satisfaction during the sophomore year).

In sum, the evidence for a direct relationship between satisfaction and congruency or "fit" between an individual and his chosen college is at best tentative. Most studies find a positive, but weak relationship, and one study (Rand, 1968) finds essentially no relationship. It is apparent that the analysis of this issue could benefit by the clarification of some problems. The definition of congruency, for example, varied from study to study. Some studies define it according to a priori meanings given to individual and environmental measures. Others defined it empirically, by means of deviation measures. Another problem concerns the definition of satisfaction. The measures of satisfaction were often simple rating scales, presenting inadequate evidence as to their validity or meaning.

The focus of this research will be on the problem of student satisfaction, with satisfaction being used in a particular sense. It is felt that one important aspect of disaffection, especially in larger university settings, is the feeling of alienation, isolation, or lack of identity with the institution as a whole. What perhaps occurs with many students in a large university is that they identify with a small subculture within the University, such as a fraternity or group within a dormitory, and have little or no contact with other

aspects of the university, outside of classroom activities, during their experience in college. Other students, more typical perhaps of commuters, may have no link to the campus other than perceiving it as a place to go through the prescribed sequence of courses to obtain the desired degree. Perceptions and attitudes toward faculty and administration in particular under these circumstances may be quite stereotypical and responsive to individual feelings, since the actual contact the individual student has with these bodies may be quite minimal.

The purpose of this study is as follows: 1) To describe a measure of alienation obtained by means of a factor analysis of 17 evaluative statements about the University of Maryland, given to students during registration; and 2) to relate alienation to other variables, measured concomitantly.

Method

Subjects

All undergraduates carrying nine or more hours were asked to complete the University Student Census (USC), as a regular part of the registration for the fall semester, 1969. The USC is an activities and attitude inventory. All responses available from sophomores, juniors and seniors were used in the factor analysis of the attitude items. Freshmen were eliminated because their perceptions would be more appropriately termed "expectations, which has a slightly different meaning. The total N was approximately 13,700, (N's varied by item).

For the subsequent analysis in which alienation was related to other variables, a random sample of 540 Ss was selected (N's varied by item). The Ss were asked to choose one of six responses (Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree, Other) to 17 evaluative statements on the USC.

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Analysis

Responses to the 17 items were factor analyzed using principal components with squared multiple corelations as communality estimates and rotated to a variamax solution. Results indicated that the first factor accounted for over 77% of the common variance. Those items with a loading of equal to or greater than .30 on that particular factor were considered as part of a relatively unidimensional attitude scale. Factor scores were obtained by a simple summation of the items on this scale for each individual. The 5 items of the derived scale, with their loadings, are presented in Table 1.

The alienation variable was related to other items on the USC which seemed relevant to the focus of this study. An analysis of variance technique was used (Winer, 1962, pp 96-104) whereby the student alienation score was used as a "dependent" variable, and subjects were grouped according to the way they answered other items of the USC.

Results

Alienation and Current Status

Student alienation differed significantly ($F=15.99$, $p < .01$), depending upon whether the students were new, or had started at Maryland at an earlier time (see Table 2).

A post-hoc comparison of the means in Table 2 indicated that the only significant differences occurred between new students (freshman or transfer) and students previously enrolled. New students anticipated significantly less alienation.

Alienation and Adjustment

A number of USC items could be interpreted as related to student "adjustment" in a broad sense. That is, they describe how the student functions in a

social and academic sense.

Alienation differed, depending upon the number of professors with which the student was acquainted . The group feeling most alienated were those acquainted with no professors, and the least alienated were those acquainted with 6 or more, ($F=7.34$, $p < .01$).

Student alienation varied ($F=2.24$, $p < .05$) depending upon what the students found to be a difficult adjustment in college (Table 3). According to the post hoc analysis in which all means were compared, the over-all significant F ratio is due largely to the difference in alienation between those Ss choosing "being away from home and friends" and all others. Those finding this the hardest adjustment felt least alienated as students at the University. The most alienated students were those indicating a difficulty in choosing a major field or career. Differences among the remaining alternatives were non-significant.

Student alienation varied as a function of dates per month (Table 4). The more dates per month indicated, the higher the degree of alienation. A post hoc analysis indicated that among those who answered the question, the over-all significant F ratio is due largely to differences between those indicating no dates per month and those indicating seven or more dates per month. The post hoc analysis also showed significantly more alienation on the part of those choosing "other", indicating perhaps some unwillingness to reveal personal information.

The type of counseling services interested in was significantly related to alienation (Table 5). Of those indicating some interest in services, the most alienated group were those who were interested in emotional or social concerns. This group felt significantly more alienated than those interested

in reading and study skills. The latter, in turn, were significantly more alienated than those not interested in seeking services.

Satisfaction and Student Background

Father's education was significantly related to alienation ($F=2.18$, $p < .05$). As indicated in Table 6, those students whose father had some college at the University of Maryland felt least alienated. A post hoc analysis revealed that this group differed from all the rest, but that none of the other groups differ from each other.

Discussion

The results of this study showing a low degree of anticipated alienation on the part of new students, compared to a relatively high level of alienation on the part of previously enrolled students is consistent with past research (e.g., Feldman and Newcomb, 1969, Lynch & Sedlacek, 1970) showing optimism and idealism by freshmen, especially concerning their future intellectual and academic functioning. The results of this research suggest that new students hold similar optimistic expectations regarding alienation or isolation in a large university. That is, new students expect to find that instructors, faculty, and administrators care about individual students, that courses will be stimulating and exciting, and that channels for expressing complaints will be readily available. These expectations are apparently not fulfilled, as suggested by the results. This does not necessarily suggest any great disillusionment on the part of the students, since such optimism is perhaps a natural, or expected part of adapting to a new setting, thus creat-

ing no great feeling of disappointment. More comparative data is needed, however, on whether this type of change in perception is true for large universities as well as smaller colleges.

The results indicated a rather consistent behavioral validation for the alienation scale. For instance, the more alienated students knew fewer faculty, felt more need for counseling (Table 5) and it was less likely that their fathers attended the University of Maryland (Table 6). The latter point could be that sharing attendance with one's father could give a basis for identification with the school. The fact that students dating more felt more alienated (Table 4) appears as an apparent contradiction to the discussion above. Several explanations are possible. It could be that the more active students on campus (including socially active) tend to be more critical of the University and become more alienated . The scale does focus on alienation from the University and this could be seen as independent of alienation from peers. It is also possible that students alienated from the school seek involvement elsewhere.

The relationship of satisfaction to adjustment is focused on in Table 3. The results indicate that the type of problem facing the student is indeed a variable in his feelings regarding alienation in school. The fact that those choosing "selection of a major field and/or a career " as being the hardest part of adjusting to college also indicated the greatest alienation is consistent with the previous research of Grieneeks (1969) and Waterman and Waterman (1969), who found that satisfaction is related to ego identity. Part of ego identity, in the Eriksonian sense, is the identification with a particular occupation and goal setting in line with that choice. These results suggest

that lack of focus on this dimension is more potent and influential regarding one's attitude toward college than are such problems as earning grades, budgeting time, or being away from home and family.

One interesting finding is that students who responded "Other" to a USC item tended to be consistently the most alienated. Perhaps the best indicant of student alienation is a tendency to withhold information about one's feelings.

It is hoped that through studies on alienation, schools, and indeed, students, will be able to change; the school by providing more meaningful experiences and opportunities for students, and students by better understanding their relationship to the school.

Table 1.

Items Relating to Student Alienation

Item	Factor Loading
Most instructors here act like they really care about students	.66
Most faculty advisors here act like they really care about students	.61
Most administrators here act like they really care about students	.59
Most of my courses are stimulating and exciting	.47
Channels for expressing student complaints are readily available	.36

Table 2.

Satisfaction as a Function of Current Status

Current Status	Mean *	Standard Deviation	N
Started earlier as a freshman	10.85	3.56	21
Transferred earlier	10.55	3.95	71
Other	10.36	3.90	102
New transfer	8.62	3.07	39
New freshmen	7.89	3.17	118

* The higher the mean, the greater the alienation ($F=15.99$ $p < .01$)

Table 3.

Alienation According to Hardest Part of Adjusting to College

Hardest Adjustment Was	Mean	Standard Deviation	N
Selecting major field/career	11.36	3.61	44
Other	10.62	4.25	34
Studying efficiently	10.08	3.36	113
Getting to know other students	10.07	2.82	46
Meeting expenses	10.04	3.70	51
Getting to know faculty	9.88	6.07	17
Earning satisfactory grades	9.61	3.44	80
Budgeting time	9.47	3.70	133
Being away from home & friends	7.87	4.26	23

$F=2.25 (p < .05)$

Table 4.

Alienation as a Function of Average Number of Dates Per Month

Number of Dates Per Month	Mean	Standard Deviation	N
Other	11.67	4.54	34
More than 10	10.43	4.17	74
7 to 10	10.15	3.53	86
1 or 2	9.77	3.61	69
3 or 4	9.76	3.44	96
Married	9.59	3.46	49
5 or 6	9.58	3.48	87
None	8.80	3.63	44

$F=2.19 (p < .05)$

Table 5.

Alienation Related to Type of Counseling Interested In

Type of Counseling	Mean	Standard Deviation	N
Other	10.90	4.11	21
Social-emotional	10.61	4.61	44
Not interested	10.34	3.75	125
Vocational-educational	9.89	3.65	160
Reading and study skills	9.33	3.39	192

$F=2.39$ ($p < .05$)

Table 6.

Father's Education and Student Alienation

Father's Education	Mean	Standard Deviation	N
Other	11.32	3.93	19
Some college - not U.Md.	10.41	3.92	86
College degree - not U. Md.	10.12	3.93	154
High school graduate	9.70	3.55	145
Less than high school	9.70	3.72	84
College degree - U. of Md.	9.09	3.75	32
Some college - U. of Md.	7.81	3.57	21

$F=2.18$, ($p < .05$)

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